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EIU Vice President for Student Affairs Announces Impending Retirement

Dec-12-2004



Shirley A. Stewart, acting vice president for student affairs at Eastern Illinois University, has announced her retirement, effective Jan. 1, 2005.

"I've worked with Shirley for over 30 years," said EIU President Lou Hencken. "I've asked her to reconsider, but she is firm in her decision to retire. I am going to miss her and the work that she does in the student affairs area. She totally supports her staff and the students at EIU."

Stewart, who received both her bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Eastern, served as a student resident assistant while Hencken was associate director of housing. Hencken recalled assigning her a particularly troublesome residence hall floor, even then having full faith in Stewart's ability to handle difficult situations.

That was the start of her more than 30 years of experience in the field of higher education.

Upon graduation, Stewart began working at Lake Land College in Mattoon where, in 1981, she was named director of the school's Career Planning and Placement Office. Seven years later, in August 1988, she returned to her alma mater as director of EIU's Department of Career Services.

Subsequent promotions found her serving as director of student services and career services, a post which brought with it administrative responsibilities for numerous departments, including health service, the Martin Luther King Jr. University Union, career services, student legal services, campus recreation and student life.

In 1998, Stewart was chosen by Hencken - then vice president for student affairs - to serve as associate vice president. She fulfilled her duties while simultaneously continuing her work as director of the university union. In 2001, when Hencken was named president of EIU, Stewart took on her most recent challenge - the position of acting vice president.

"Shirley's retirement is a great loss for the university," Hencken said. "Whatever her role at the university, she has always kept the interests of the students foremost."

Stewart's accomplishments during her 16-plus-year-tenure at Eastern have included the modernization of Eastern's Department of Career Services to include four annual job fairs and a computerized registration and credential service. Continued improvements in the student affairs area have included collaboration between students and fee-funded areas in approving student fee increases.

Her most recent passion, however, has been the "revitalization" of EIU's university union. Under her directorship, major renovation/remodeling projects have taken place, including restrooms, third-floor meeting rooms and hallways, the bookstore, bowling/billiard area, Copy Express, Student Activity Center, both ballrooms, elevators, lounges, tuck pointing of the building and air conditioning improvements. Additions to the union include the Java B&B coffee shop, Panther Pantry, a food court and hair salon.

In announcing her retirement late last week, Stewart commented, "I wish continued success and growth for my alma mater. I will greatly miss the students and my team of directors who I know will continue their excellent work in providing high quality service to students."

Hencken announced he plans to meet with student affairs staff members this coming week to discuss Stewart's departure and what comes next. Meanwhile, however, as former vice president for student affairs, he plans to handle Stewart's duties until an interim vice president is chosen through an internal university search. That person is expected to be chosen by the end of January 2005, Hencken added.